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C O N F I D E N T I A L AMMAN 001137

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KISL](#) [KPAL](#) [IS](#) [JO](#)

SUBJECT: INITIAL REACTION TO RETURN OF AMBASSADOR TO ISRAEL

REF: A. AMMAN 1099

[1](#)B. AMMAN 1094

Classified By: CDA David Hale for Reasons 1.4 (b), (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Following the Israeli-Palestinian summit in Sharm al-Sheikh, major Jordanian dailies on January 9 led with generally upbeat headlines on the meeting and highlighted King Abdullah's supporting role (ref a). Scant attention was paid, however, to the announcement of the return of a Jordanian ambassador to Israel. Leading editorial writers briefly noted the diplomatic move in the context of summit events but have so far offered little direct comment on the issue.

[1](#)2. (U) Critics of normalization with Israel did not let the announcement pass unnoticed. Secretary-General of the Islamic Action Front (IAF) Hamza Mansour publicly denounced the return of Jordan's ambassador, saying that it ignored "Israeli crimes" and constituted a "free gift" to Israel without receiving anything in return. A self-described spokesman for families of Jordanians imprisoned in Israel stated that family members were "shocked" by the announcement and that they condemned the GOJ's action (until the Sharm al-Sheikh summit, the Jordanian government's public position had been that the return of an ambassador was linked to the return of some Jordanian prisoners held in Israel). The coordinating committee of opposition political parties criticized the decision as premature and unwarranted, providing political gains for Israel without any benefit for Palestinians or Jordanians. Jamil Abu Bakr of the Jordanian Muslim Brotherhood was quoted by the Associated Press as rejecting any ties with the Israeli government and claiming that "Sharon's hands and teeth are dripping with the blood of the Palestinian people."

[1](#)3. (C) Several contacts told emboffs that they had expected the GOJ announcement. Former member of Parliament and Jordanian-Palestinian community leader Hamadeh Faraneh said he believed that Jordan was "looking for an excuse" to comply with Israeli requests for returning its ambassador and that the summit provided "the perfect cover," particularly since the Palestinians did not offer any objections. Ghazi Al Saadi, Jordanian-Palestinian journalist and head of Al-Jalil publishing house, downplayed the GOJ's decision, saying that it was a political statement without any real impact since communications between the GOJ and GOI had continued uninterrupted over the last several years. Saadi said he had earlier told an interviewer from an Israeli radio station that he hoped Israel would respond and "show its good intentions" by freeing Jordanian prisoners. Former government minister and current president of Mu'tah University, Dr. Suleiman Arabiyat, echoed the more positive comments of some East Banker contacts in supporting the GOJ announcement and expressing hope that it would strengthen Jordanian influence in the peace process.

HALE